



Chapter 4: Public Involvement

4.1 Introduction

US 40 is a public highway that is intended, designed, and operated to meet the needs of the traveling public for personal and commercial use. In recent years, traffic associated with the development and operation of the region's oil and gas industry has increased dramatically, and this change has greatly affected the function of the highway. Residential growth has contributed to the increased traffic as well, mostly through new housing developments on the edges of existing communities.

People who use the highway every day are a valuable source of information on existing operational deficiencies and safety issues, and collecting information from them through a public involvement process was a primary focus of the corridor study. Providing meaningful opportunities for public participation ensures that the final planning accurately reflects the needs and concerns of corridor users.

This chapter summarizes the US 40 Corridor Study public involvement process and the results of interaction with stakeholders, residents, tribal representatives, and agency representatives. Detailed information about public involvement activities, meeting attendees and results, and media materials is contained in the *Public Involvement Summary Report*, which is included as Appendix D.

4.2 General Public Involvement Strategy and Elements

The strategy for involving the public in the corridor study included a variety of activities that were integrated into and applied through a public involvement plan (PIP). The US 40 Corridor Study PIP was designed to meet the needs of corridor users and area residents while supporting the overall planning process. The public involvement activities described in the PIP were designed to (1) ensure that the process identified the most important issues, and (2) facilitate the involvement of the public and key stakeholders. Public involvement was a key element in determining the most appropriate and realistic highway improvement recommendations, with a goal of identifying solutions to meet the needs that the general public and stakeholders identified as important to their everyday use of the highway.

In general, public involvement activities included:

- **Interviews** with key stakeholders, UDOT staff, local government representatives, tribal representatives, and state and federal agency representatives
- **Workshops** and open houses with the general public, local government representatives, stakeholders, and state and federal agency representatives
- **Correspondence** via the corridor study Web site and electronic mail

UDOT sponsored stakeholder and public workshops and open houses in Vernal, Roosevelt, and Heber City to provide corridor-wide access for residents. The interviews, workshops, and correspondence were augmented by a variety of public involvement support tools, which included corridor-wide mailings, a study brochure, a newsletter, and a series of media releases (press releases and display advertisements) to inform and invite participation in the study. The PIP was developed in partnership with UDOT and allowed activities to be adjusted as needed to meet the needs of the study and its participants.

Table 4.2-1 shows the public involvement elements and schedule, and Table 4.2-2 below lists the public involvement support tools.

Table 4.2-1. US 40 Public Involvement Elements and Schedule

Element	Schedule
Stakeholder interviews	February and March 2007
Public workshops – round 1	Late April 2007
Stakeholder workshops – round 1	Late April 2007
Agency meeting	Mid-August 2007
Stakeholder workshops – round 2	Mid-August 2007
Public workshops – round 2	September 2007
Community presentations	August–September 2007; also scheduled as needed

**Table 4.2-2. Public Involvement Support Tools**

Tool	Timing
Media coverage (newspaper and radio)	As needed to support PIP
Comment forms	Coordinated with public events and project needs
Introductory study brochure and newsletters	At introduction and before each public workshop
Bulk mailing / e-mail list	Corridor-wide project kickoff with ongoing use, especially for upcoming events
Study Web site (as part of the UDOT Web site)	Ongoing to provide information and gather input
Community presentations	Timing to be determined; to present study information and gather input
Contact list of study team	For miscellaneous stakeholder and public contacts

4.2.1 Public Involvement Goals and Objectives

The PIP includes a series of goals and objectives that the study team used to guide public involvement activities. These goals and objectives are listed below.

Goals

The goals of the PIP are:

- To create a high degree of public awareness about the study's purpose, process, and opportunities for public involvement
- To develop public trust in the process, consultant team, and UDOT
- To meet area residents' unique needs and expectations for participation
- To provide timely opportunities for participation at project kickoff and at key decision points during the process
- To identify and address the most important public and user concerns
- To foster understanding of and support for the final study recommendations among residents, local governments, state and federal government agencies, and key stakeholders
- To effectively involve agencies in planning for US 40 corridor improvements

Objectives

The objectives of the PIP are:

- To produce and distribute clear study information that meets public needs
- To keep the study Web site information current
- To update the study mailing list as needed
- To clearly communicate study information through the UDOT Public Involvement Coordinator to the local media
- To keep UDOT informed regarding public input and perspectives
- To inform UDOT of any outstanding public issues that could require changes in the PIP

4.3 Stakeholder Interaction

A *stakeholder* is defined as a person or entity that is directly affected by changes to the corridor or that can influence the decisions made about the corridor. The project stakeholder list was developed with this definition in mind and consists of community and county government representatives, elected officials, tribal representatives, representatives of interested organizations, oil and gas industry representatives, trucking industry representatives, planning administrators, school district representatives, special transportation district representatives, federal agency representatives (BLM and USFS), Utah Highway Patrol representatives, and UDOT maintenance staff.

Interaction with corridor stakeholders occurred in two ways: (1) during initial interviews to introduce the study and identify key issues, and (2) during two rounds of stakeholder workshops to refine and prioritize issues and review the preliminary project list and study recommendations. In a project of this type, stakeholder interviews are typically conducted on an individual (one-on-one) basis. However, because of the corridor's length and the amount of interest from community stakeholders, UDOT sponsored focused group meetings in addition to interviews. This ensured that all stakeholders would have the opportunity to participate and have their comments and concerns heard.



4.3.1 Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews were conducted in person or over the phone at the beginning of the process with individuals and small groups of about 50 stakeholders across the corridor. The interviews were conducted during February and March 2007.

4.3.1.1 Summary of Stakeholder Interviews

Initial stakeholder interviews identified the following major concerns regarding the corridor, its operation, and future needs. A complete list of the comments received during stakeholder interviews is included in Appendix D, Public Involvement Summary Report.

- Increased congestion in the east end of the corridor between Roosevelt, Vernal, and Naples
- Lack of capacity to meet traffic volume needs, especially in the east end of the corridor between Duchesne and Vernal
- Increased truck traffic and resulting conflicts between passenger vehicles and trucks along the corridor, especially at major intersections and through communities
- Excessive speeds throughout the corridor
- Increased travel delays, especially in the east end of the corridor between Duchesne and Naples
- Intersection conflicts in communities
- Lack of left-turn and right-turn lanes at major intersections such as SR 88, Twelvemile Road, Pleasant Valley Road, Bridgeland Road, SR 87, SR 191, Bonanza Road, Vernal Avenue, and other intersections near and in Roosevelt, Vernal, Duchesne, and Naples
- Intersection geometrics that do not accommodate large trucks
- Passing conflicts; lack of sufficient number and length of passing lanes
- Insufficient shoulder width throughout the corridor
- Insufficient space to pull off the road for emergencies, traffic stops, and so on
- High number of wildlife strikes
- Lack of school bus pullouts
- Lack of stormwater control, primarily through communities

- Transportation of hazardous materials through the corridor and hazardous materials leaking from trucks
- Overuse of USFS restrooms by corridor travelers
- Difficult and unsafe access to USFS Whiskey Springs day-use facility in Daniels Canyon
- Cattle on roadway in Daniels Canyon
- Community transportation issues as identified during previous UDOT and community planning efforts; should be considered for inclusion in the US 40 Corridor Study, as appropriate

4.3.2 Stakeholder Workshops

Two rounds of stakeholder workshops were held at key decision points in the process. Stakeholder Workshop #1 was conducted early in the process to refine issues identified during interviews and to determine priority areas of concern. Stakeholder Workshop #2 was held near the end of the process to present and gather input regarding the draft project lists and planning recommendations before presenting the lists to the public. The complete description of stakeholder workshops, attendees, and results is included in Appendix D, Public Involvement Summary Report.

4.3.2.1 Stakeholder Workshop #1

The first round of stakeholder workshops was held in Vernal, Roosevelt, and Heber City in late April and early May 2007. Workshop participants included representatives from local city and county governments, local school districts, local sheriff's departments, the Uintah Basin Transportation Special Services District, Utah Highway Patrol, BLM, USFS, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. In addition to refining issues identified through the stakeholder interviews, workshop participants identified priority areas of concern as a preliminary step toward identifying corridor goals. The following priority areas of concern were identified:

- General roadway safety
- Congestion
- Roadway design and operation
- Intersection safety



4.3.2.2 Stakeholder Workshop #2

The second round of stakeholder workshops was held in Vernal, Roosevelt, and Heber City in August 2007. Participants included representatives of local city and county governments, school districts, local sheriff's departments, USFS, and BLM as well as other interested corridor users. The workshops focused on presenting the proposed project and plan lists and provided an opportunity for participants to comment on and add to the lists. Workshop participants showed strong overall support for the list of proposed improvement projects and noted that the order of priority seemed appropriate. Participants suggested additional projects for the project and plan lists, including the following:

- Add additional passing lanes corridor-wide, but especially in Daniels Canyon.
- Make additional intersection improvements in Roosevelt, Duchesne, Vernal, and Naples.
- Consider intersection projects identified during previous UDOT and community planning efforts.

4.4 General Public Outreach

UDOT sponsored two rounds of public open-house events to provide opportunities for the general public to participate in the corridor study process. UDOT informed the public about the meetings via an initial bulk mailing, media releases before the events, and a bulk mailing to everyone on the project mailing list. Events were held in Heber City, Roosevelt, and Vernal. The public was also invited to participate in the process via the study's Web site where they could read current study information, learn of upcoming events, and provide comments. A complete record of public open-house events, attendees, and comments received is included in Appendix D, Public Involvement Summary Report.

4.4.1 Public Open House #1

Public Open House #1 was held in Heber City, Roosevelt, and Vernal in late April and early May 2007. The purposes of this open house were to introduce the study and to gather comments regarding outstanding corridor issues and concerns. The following issues were identified at Open House #1:

- Congestion problem, especially in the east end of the corridor between Duchesne and Naples
- Lack of sufficient number and length of passing lanes
- Narrow shoulders
- Heavy truck traffic, which causes conflicts at major intersections with state highways, at truck access points, and through communities
- Unsafe access and egress at major intersections
- Wildlife strikes
- Unsafe pedestrian crossings on US 40 in communities
- Lack of roadway capacity to minimize delays; also affects safety
- Roadway design issues: some intersections do not accommodate large trucks, and some bridges are too narrow or slope the wrong way for motorists to maintain their current speed

4.4.2 Public Open House #2

Public Open House #2 was held in Roosevelt and Vernal in September 2007. A second public open house was not held in Heber City due to the low turnout at the first open house at that location. The purposes of the second open house were to present and gather comments on the project and plan lists. Like the stakeholders, the public showed strong overall support for the project list. The following additional comments were provided at Open House #2:

- Consider adding westbound passing lanes in Daniels Canyon.
- Provide protected left-turn lanes on US 40 between Naples and Jensen.
- Consider providing additional passing lanes between Ballard and the “Twists.”
- Raise the priority of Projects Q1 and R1 (passing lanes between MP 122 and MP 134 in each direction).



- Widen Antelope Creek Bridge (MP 97).
- Add a center lane and/or turn lanes at intersections between Naples and Jensen.
- Add lanes to bridges over the Uinta River at MP 102.
- Re-evaluate the narrow intersection at MP 101 and US 40.

4.5 Ute Tribe Outreach

The Ute Tribe, which controls much of the land along the US 40 study corridor, was specifically engaged twice during the planning process. The first meeting with tribal representatives occurred at the issues identification stage, while the second meeting focused on discussion of the proposed project and plan lists.

4.5.1 Tribal Meeting #1

The first meeting with tribal representatives included a presentation that described the study process and discussion with the Tribal Business Council. The following comments and concerns were discussed at Tribal Meeting #1:

- Corridor traffic has increased dramatically. As a result, there is road damage and the road is dangerous. A four-lane road throughout the corridor would be helpful.
- The tribe is concerned about funding to implement the study recommendations.
- The “Twists” (near Vernal) is particularly dangerous.
- Big game and other wildlife and big trucks along the highway cause conflicts with passenger vehicles.
- It is important to remember that this is a scenic drive, so funding should be used to maintain aesthetics and scenic quality.
- Property along the corridor, including the city of Duchesne, is tribal property. Because the road is on tribal land, the tribe must approve improvements and should be dealt with as a government agency.
- The tribe has concerns about highway right-of-way. The fees collected from oil and gas and utility development along the corridor should be used to improve and maintain the US 40 right-of-way on tribal lands. A

tribal representative stated that right-of-way is important, but that overall safety along the corridor should be the focus.

- A traffic light is needed at the exit/entrance of the Ute reservation (intersection of US 40 and 7500 East in Fort Duchesne). Traffic is especially problematic between 3:30 PM and 7:00 PM. Also, highway construction should be planned so that it does not disturb travel.
- The dugway¹ at the school entrance is dangerous. A number of tribal members have been hit by cars while crossing the street at the top of the hill.
- Road markings (striping) need maintenance because the salt used during the winter erodes the reflective paint.
- If environmental mitigation is involved as part of project implementation, the tribe wants to mitigate, and would like the credits and funding to do so if impacts occur on tribal lands.

4.5.2 Tribal Meeting #2

A second meeting with tribal representatives focused on the proposed project and plan lists. This meeting involved only the tribal administrator because the Tribal Business Council was unavailable. The following comments and concerns were discussed during Tribal Meeting #2:

- The tribe would like to know if UDOT will need additional right-of-way from tribal land for the improvements.
- The tribe questions whether additional highway, intersection, and interchange improvements are needed along with the new signal location at the entrance to the tribal headquarters. The tribe is concerned that the planned new signal could cause rear-end accidents at the light.
- UDOT should consider additional improvements at the hilltop east of Ballard; the sight distance for cars accessing US 40 is inadequate.
- UDOT should evaluate any additional improvements that might be needed to make the geometrics of the L&L corner in Roosevelt work better for trucks.

¹ A dugway is a road constructed in an area that has been “dug out” of a hill or that has been excavated below the ground surface.



4.6 Agency Outreach

Agencies with regulatory authority over resources along US 40 or that are interested in the operation of the corridor were invited to participate in the corridor study process in three ways: in stakeholder interviews, at stakeholder workshops and public events, and at a special agency workshop. Comments and input from agencies received as part of the initial interviews and stakeholder workshops are included in the highlights listed in Section 4.3, Stakeholder Interaction.

4.6.1 Special Agency Workshop

UDOT sponsored a special workshop to present information to and gather comments from agency representatives. Agency representatives provided comments on the draft project and plan lists, helped identify any “fatal flaws,” and commented on projects that need modification or that UDOT should consider removing from the lists. Highlights of the input received during the agency workshop are listed below. A complete list of comments and attendees is included in Appendix D, Public Involvement Summary Report.

- The USFWS representative stated that surveys for Ute ladies’-tresses will need to be conducted before construction and should be mentioned in the corridor study. The USFWS representative noted that this plant, which is listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, could occur along most of the corridor east of Strawberry Reservoir.
- The USFWS representative noted that there is a bald eagle nest east of Duchesne, and winter roosting occurs along the river.
- USFS would like advance notice of project construction so it can plan pullouts to accommodate USFS facilities along the highway.
- The USFS representative noted that pulling into and out off the USFS Whiskey Springs day-use area in Daniels Canyon is very dangerous, and access to this site from US 40 should be addressed in the project list.

4.7 Summary of Comments and Observations

The public involvement activities for the US 40 Corridor Study accomplished UDOT's goals and objectives for including the public in the study process. One-on-one stakeholder interviews, which provided valuable information that helped the team identify a very detailed list of issues, problem areas, and concerns for all facets of corridor operation and needs, were very successful. The stakeholder workshops provided opportunities for collaborative discussion, which helped the team understand the priority concerns along the highway. The results of the stakeholder interviews and workshops supported the subsequent development of corridor goals. The collaborative nature of the discussions also resulted in very positive responses regarding the proposed project and plan lists.

Tribal input was especially helpful at the initial stage of project planning and informed the team about specific issues that were not identified through interactions with other stakeholders and the general public. The initial meeting with tribal representatives set the stage for future positive communications with the tribe regarding project implementation. Agency comments, although not lengthy, provided valuable insight into specific issues and led to refinement of the proposed project and plan lists. Finally, participation from the general public, although limited, did provide critical input regarding additional projects to consider and overall support for the proposed project and plan lists.